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Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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Four principals recognized for strong educational leadership

MADISON—Four educational leaders whose strong educational leadership contributes to student academic achievement and a positive school climate have been named 2009 Wisconsin Principals of the Year by Elizabeth Burmaster, state superintendent of public instruction, and Jim Lynch, executive director for the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA).

Fellow administrators, school board members, teachers, students, and parents were among those making nominations for the Principal of the Year program. Criteria for being chosen to represent the state's elementary and secondary school principals include a commitment to excellence, high expectations of staff, evidence of outstanding contributions to the school and the profession, and being an established and respected member of the community. The 2009 Wisconsin Principals of the Year are

- Ryan Champeau, North High School, Waukesha;
- Kathleen Lemberger, Washington Junior High School, Manitowoc;
- Bobbie Schmidt, Richmond Elementary School, Appleton; and
- Janice Zuege, associate principal, Hortonville Elementary and Middle schools.

"A principal's job is both demanding and rewarding. Their many roles reach into the classroom to support teachers and into the student body to establish a learning environment for academic success," Burmaster noted. "A principal also inspires the school staff and must connect with the local community, while continuing a journey of life-long learning."

"There is a plethora of research that points to the importance of strong principal leadership in exceptional schools. Our Wisconsin principals are some of the finest in the nation, and the Principals of the Year represent the best of the best. It is important for us to recognize and celebrate their work," said Lynch.

The Principal of the Year Selection Committee is made up of representatives from AWSA, the Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin Association of School Boards, Wisconsin Education Association

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Council, Wisconsin PTA, and a former National Distinguished Principal. The elementary, middle, and high school Principals of the Year will be recognized at their respective AWSA workshops and conferences in January and February 2010. The Wisconsin Principal of the Year program is supported by AWSA Corporate Partners. A list of these companies is available on the AWSA website at <http://www.awsa.org>.

High School Principal of the Year Ryan Champeau

With more than 30 years of experience as a school administrator, most of it at Waukesha North High School, Ryan Champeau is a tireless innovator and a champion of personalized education. Champeau is a co-author of “Breaking Ranks II,” the high school reform guide by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). He brings the “Breaking Ranks II” vision to North.

He calls collaboration the key component of professional efficacy and stresses that what is best for students must always be the primary focus. He led his staff to enhance the curriculum with character-based education while changing the school schedule to provide more flexibility. As a result, teachers have 70 minutes of weekly collaboration time to address formative assessments, which are used to personalize teaching. The school’s advisory program won a “Promising Practices Award” from the Wisconsin Character Education Partnership. Additionally, the Classic 8 Conference named North the 2008 Sportsmanship School of the Year.

Champeau cultivates the learning community in his school. Faculty members are observed weekly, with the administrative team rotating quarterly. More than 20 teachers have moved into administrative ranks due to Champeau’s mentorship. Champeau’s “coaching and support of me as a potential school leader was a defining moment in my life,” said Mike Previte a North parent and professor at Waukesha County Technical College.

Champeau earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and a doctorate in urban education from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. As Wisconsin’s High School Principal of the Year, he becomes a nominee for the 2010 Met Life/NASSP National High School Principal of the Year award.

Middle-Level Principal of the Year Kathleen Lemberger

Kathleen Lemberger’s strong leadership and focus on student learning has led to success at Washington Junior High School in Manitowoc. A three-time recipient of the New Wisconsin Promise School of Recognition award, the rural school has seen an increase in student achievement and student attendance and a reduction in out-of-school suspensions with Lemberger at the helm.

The language and actions of teachers have changed as they embraced collaborative leadership under Lemberger’s direction. “Our entire focus and mission at Washington Junior High is on student learning,” she said. Lemberger and her staff use three critical questions to shape the academic program. “First, how do we know students have learned to use their minds well? Second, what is meaningful

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intellectual work? And finally, what should be the main goals for student learning across all subject areas in a school?"

Through Lemberger's support, instructional staff members use more formative assessment and grading for learning. She encourages staff to develop lessons that help students make connections and bring new meaning to their lives. Junior High 101 pairs eighth-grade students with the next year's incoming students as mentors to work on issues such as team building and alcohol and drug abuse, smoothing transitions from elementary school to junior high school.

Her intervention on behalf of one student turned around his behavior and achievement. In an address to a school assembly the student said, "We struggle sometimes, but our wonderful staff gives us a push, and that gives us the boost we need to succeed."

Lemberger is in her eighth year as principal at Washington Junior High School and has 18 years experience as a school administrator. She holds a bachelor's degree in physical education from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. She did coursework at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee to become a director of instruction, and earned her principal licensure from Marion University in Fond du Lac. As Wisconsin's Middle-Level Principal of the Year, she becomes a nominee for the 2010 Met Life/NASSP National Middle-Level Principal of the Year award.

Elementary School Principal of the Year Bobbie Schmidt

Described as a passionate leader, Roberta (Bobbie) Schmidt has been a principal at Richmond Elementary School in Appleton for the past seven years. She considers the school's continuous improvement planning among her top accomplishments and says the school's Math Achievement Partnership contributes to that academic improvement. In her first year at Richmond, Schmidt recognized that students needed individual support in mathematics. The partnership, which pairs community volunteers with students and a daily math tutoring program, was so successful it has been replicated in five other schools across the district.

While the Appleton Area School District has been focused on nurturing a healthy school environment in all schools, the Richmond staff under Schmidt's leadership has taken this to the next level. The school earned the Governor's School Health Award in the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years and was named one of the Top 5 Healthy Schools in the Nation by *Health Magazine*. This accomplishment has extended beyond the school to Schmidt's work on committees to establish safe walking routes to school and improve the nutritional value of the district's school lunch program.

In support of her nomination, Peter Kelly of the United Way Fox Cities said, "When you speak with Bobbie for even a short period of time, you immediately hear her passion for her work. She is

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always looking to improve herself and enhance the learning environment for the teachers, students, and their families.”

Schmidt worked one year as an assistant principal at the district’s James Madison Middle School and served as a trainer, instructional leader, and classroom teacher. She earned a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and special education from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She earned a master’s degree from Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass., and certification in educational leadership from Marian University in Fond du Lac. As Wisconsin’s Elementary School Principal of the Year, she becomes a nominee for the National Association of Elementary School Principals National Distinguished Principals Program.

Associate Principal of the Year Janice Zuege

In her 13th year as an assistant principal at Hortonville Middle School and Hortonville Elementary School, Janice Zuege is responsible for scheduling students and training staff members on the use of technology. In addition to the electronic grade book and parent portal, Zuege has supported staff use of wikis, blogs, GPS units, and Smart Boards.

As part of a strategic planning group, Zuege facilitated the development of a multi-tiered district communication plan. She was instrumental in leading and implementing the Kids at Hope belief system. Outreach to other schools and the community include meetings, presentations, newsletter articles, and Family Days activities that carry the message that “all children are capable of success, no excuses.” She also worked on the SMART Start program to support students’ academic, personal, and social development. Through Zuege’s collaborative leadership, the program has developed into a very positive part of the school day for all students. The Hortonville Middle School’s Accountability and Remediation program has resulted in improved student achievement.

Zuege is commended for using her former teaching experience to work cooperatively with teachers, parents, and students. “Her understanding of classroom management and the demanding role of a teacher assist her in fair decision-making as an administrator,” middle school teacher Sara McMorrow wrote in support of her nomination.

Zuege earned a bachelor’s degree in education at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and her master’s degree in educational administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As Wisconsin’s Associate Principal of the Year, she was a nominee for the 2009 NASSP / Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year award.

“Collaborative leadership is the unifying characteristic of these Principals of the Year,” Burmaster said. “Strong leaders are vital in shaping a school climate in which every child receives a quality education.”

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